

**"MILLIGAN'S RANGE  
IS AMAZING."**

*CHICAGO THEATRE REVIEW*

**"A DEFTLY CALIBRATED  
EMOTIONAL PERFORMANCE."**

*JOHANNA RIAN, PROGRAM DIRECTOR,  
MAYO CLINIC*

**"THERE'S GRIT AND INTENT  
THAT CAN'T BE MISSED."**

*BROADWAY WORLD*

**"MILLIGAN DEMONSTRATES  
THE FEELINGS THAT EVERY  
DOCTOR HAS FELT BUT  
NEVER ACKNOWLEDGED."**

*BARBARA L. MCANENY MD, PRESIDENT,  
AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION*

**"SHATTERING AND  
SUPERB WRITING."**

*MICHAEL ZANDI, NATIONAL HOSPITAL,  
LONDON*

**"COMPELLING AND  
THOUGHT-PROVOKING."**

*DR AVA EASTON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE,  
THE ENCEPHALITIS SOCIETY, LONDON UK*

**"I WAS STUNNED BY ITS  
ACCURACY & RAWNESS."**

*THOMAS BODENHEIMER MD, AUTHOR  
UNDERSTANDING HEALTH POLICY  
AND IMPROVING PRIMARY CARE*

**"FIRST  
RATE."**

*WASHINGTON POST*

**"A DRIVING AND NUANCED  
SOLO PRODUCTION."**

*DC METRO THEATRE ARTS*

**"ANYONE INVOLVED IN  
MEDICAL CARE WOULD  
BENEFIT FROM SEEING  
THIS PERFORMANCE."**

*ROBERT E. MCAFFEE, MD,  
FORMER PRESIDENT,  
AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION*

**"IN A WORD, NAILED IT!"**

*BRIAN O. FOY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
THE FORUM FOR MEDICAL AFFAIRS*

**"MAGNIFICENT  
PERFORMANCE."**

*DR. OLIVER FEIN, PHYSICIANS FOR  
A NATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAM*

**"EXCELLENT."**

*DOREEN MCINTYRE,  
MINNESOTA NURSES ASSOCIATION,  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS*

**"A DYNAMIC REMINDER  
OF HUMANITY LOST  
IN THE SYSTEM."**

*THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN  
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION*

# SIDE EFFECTS

In a meeting with his friend and lawyer, Dr. William MacQueen finds he cannot evade what is eroding his professional and personal life.

WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY  
**MICHAEL MILLIGAN**

DIRECTED BY  
**TOM OPPENHEIM**

**POOR BOX  
THEATER**

**THE MEDICINE OF ART TAKES ON THE ART OF MEDICINE**

PRODUCER  
POOR BOX THEATER  
Chicago  
[www.poorboxtheater.com](http://www.poorboxtheater.com)

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The Poor Box Theater presents Michael Milligan's *Side Effects*,  
an "authoritative" and "riveting" examination of the  
impacts of medicine on those who practice it.

# SIDE EFFECTS

A landmark 2015 study by the Mayo Clinic found half of physicians in America struggle with symptoms of burnout. Playwright Michael Milligan spent the last couple years asking doctors around the country "why?" In his new play, *Side Effects*, Milligan shares the answers he received through the fictionalized account of one doctor's struggle.

No one ever told Dr. William Macqueen about the "side effects" of practicing medicine. As bureaucratic and financial pressures collide with his professional standards, William must reconcile the art and business of medicine.

*Side Effects* has struck a chord with the medical community. Following a special presentation by the Mayo Clinic, Johanna Rian, director of the Mayo's Center for Humanities in Medicine described the piece as "*a deftly calibrated emotional performance. The play offers a multi-layered perspective of a physician in crisis, caught between a desire to serve his patients and the demands of the current health system.*"

The strong response has inspired Milligan to perform the piece in untraditional settings, like doctors' and nurses' conferences. Most recently, the Maine Medical Association presented *Side Effects* to conference attendees. "*Mesmerized would not be inaccurate in describing the reaction. An enthusiastic standing ovation completed the performance. An accomplished actor and playwright, Mr. Milligan really hit the mark for us,*" said Gordon Smith, Executive Vice President of the MMA.

Milligan's interest in physicians' struggles developed while he was touring his other solo play about the healthcare system, *Mercy Killers*— a piece which depicts a man's struggle to pay for his wife's cancer treatments after losing insurance. The piece is often presented and championed by doctors and nurses.

"I was spending a lot of time on tour with doctors and nurses," Milligan says. "I started to notice similar frustrations and complaints all over the country. I found people's stories very moving and felt compelled to share their struggles with the public. So, I started to do formal interviews wherever I toured and read everything I could get my hands on. An ethicist at the Mayo told me about diagnostic terminology that has developed for what I was hearing about, he called it 'moral distress.' When I heard that phrase, it resonated with what I was hearing in interviews. The medical literature says that 'moral distress occurs when one knows the ethically correct action to take but feels powerless to take that action.' Healthcare is more bureaucratic and corporatized every year. Decisions are increasingly influenced by claims analysts, hospital administrators, and entitlement bureaucrats — *Side Effects* is a meditation on the resulting conflicts of interest that arise and their personal impacts on both patients AND doctors."

Milligan continues, "For me, theater and medicine are complementary. When our bodies are sick, we go to a doctor for a diagnosis and treatment. But where do we go when there is a sickness in society, in our collective psyche? The origins of dramatic art, of tragedy, deal with that kind of illness. By bearing witness to the ills that afflict us as a community, we are given new emotional and symbolic resources to recognize and treat them."

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# SIDE EFFECTS

REVIEWS AND QUOTES

“First-rate... Milligan is an engaging, canny actor with a gift for natural behavior and the tics of everyday speech. He vividly shows the deep reluctance of his characters to complain while also building steam around the pressures that drive them to snap. And boy do they snap. Milligan has done his research, having toured *Mercy Killers* around the country and now premiering *Side Effects*. The data is authoritative; each incident about a treatment or billing code rings true, winding these guys ever tighter until they blow. We all know that politics is more important than theater, right? But the talk is frequently deeper and better in the theater, where you have to sit, listen and think for an hour or two. Check it out, and reckon with these haggard men before deciding what we ought to do next.”

WASHINGTON POST

“...a driving and nuanced solo production about the health care system. As Dr. William MacQueen, Michael Milligan delivers a passionate performance about the conflicted complexities, doctor-patient relationship, generational changes, economic considerations, and ethical responsibilities confronting doctors and the medical profession... Michael Milligan has taken a substantial challenge. Writing from collected interviews with doctors from around the country, Milligan has spoken with physicians who normally don't have time to talk, created a picture of these professionals as people and most successfully, has gotten to the heart of the matter.”

DC METRO THEATER ARTS

**“Compelling, timely... it's effective to see the results of all this pressure and a broken system on one man, which is why Milligan is effective in his play in getting across an argument that has**



**the power to actually move someone out of their entrenched position on Capitol Hill. And that's saying a lot. There's grit and intent behind “Side Effects” that can't be missed, and Milligan is doing great work bringing it to a place where it might even have an effect.”**

BROADWAY WORLD

Milligan does an impressive job of conveying a massive amount of fascinating information without it coming off like he's reading a white paper. He covers a lot of ground in just over an hour—the stress of keeping a business running, the overwhelming amount of work that must be done just to keep his head above water and the opportunities that that creates to make mistakes, and—most effectively—the gulf between MacQueen's desire to save lives and his love of the “art of medicine” and the bureaucratic nightmare that his days have become. Milligan makes his desperation and exhaustion almost palpable to the audience, laying bare the frustrations and Sisyphean nature of his life that have him contemplating diving head-first out of his fifth-floor office window. And it's only made harder by the glimpses he gets of the way things could be—he has memories of his father treating patients in exchange for cartons of eggs and, more recently, a visit to France where the prices for medical services are listed on the wall and the doctors still make house calls. Instead, we have a system of our own choosing that values efficiency over empathy and taking the

time to get to know patients on an individual level—as Dr. MacQueen quips, “Americans don’t mind a gulag, as long it’s privately run.” *Side Effects* shows a different side of the healthcare system that often gets ignored. Whereas television series like *Grey’s Anatomy* and *ER* focus on the big, dramatic events that test physicians, Milligan shows us how, in real life, it’s the small, daily struggles and mindless tasks that can wear the noblest of intentions down and create the kind of errors that have real consequences for patients and physicians alike.”

5 STARS. DC THEATER SCENE

“A small audience of healthcare providers gathered in a theater on West 27th Street for a private performance of the one-man play, *Side Effects*, written and performed by Michael Milligan. My closest friend from medical school sat to my right. The house lights cut to black. For the next hour, Milligan’s character—a primary care doctor and heir to his father’s practice—eerily reenacted the frustrations of being an American physician. He exuded his resentment toward the larger healthcare system; his exhaustion; and his sense of helplessness and the consequent alienation from his patients, loved ones, and ultimately himself. Milligan’s character was a tragic archetype who hit a little too close to home for many of us. When the house lights came on, we sat tearful and stunned.”

ROSALYN E. PLOTZKER, MD MEDSCAPE

“Michael Milligan has captured the sum total of pressures that confront today’s physicians in his current production of *Side Effects*. A realistic, engaging, and very dramatic portrayal of the life of an average doctor trying to meet the demands of a busy practice, as he nearly succumbs to a breakdown and considers leaving the profession he loves so much. Anyone involved in medical care, from the caregivers to the patients we serve, would benefit from seeing this performance.”

ROBERT E MCAFEE MD,  
FORMER PRESIDENT, AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.

“Michael Milligan’s play, *Side Effects*, performed by Michael himself — a talented actor — lays bare the conflicting emotions of a physician facing severe burnout from the indignities of modern medical practice while struggling to behave ethically toward his patients. As a primary care physician, I was stunned by its accuracy and rawness. Healthcare professionals and managers should see this performance.”

THOMAS BODENHEIMER MD, AUTHOR OF “UNDERSTANDING HEALTH POLICY” AND “IMPROVING PRIMARY CARE”

“Magnificent performance... Milligan has captured the emotional and ethical dimensions of primary care practice in the United States.

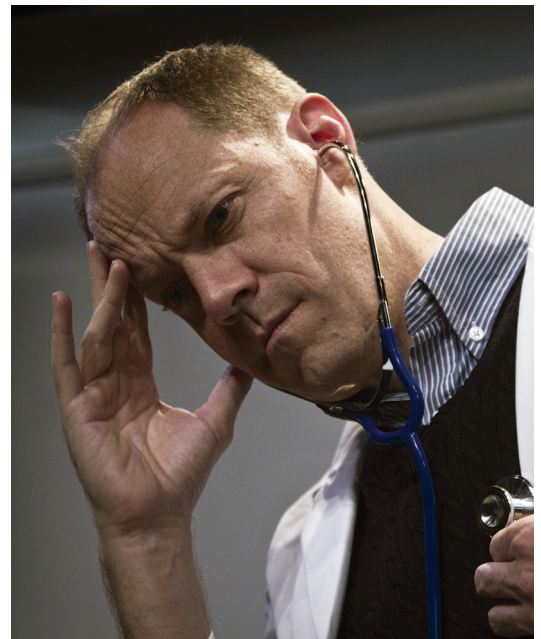
OLIVER FEIN, PHYSICIANS FOR A  
NATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAM

“The changes in health care have effected all of us, including the providers. This play demonstrates this in a personal way. Excellent.

DOREEN MCINTYRE, MINNESOTA NURSES  
ASSOCIATION, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

“Michael Milligan delivers a deftly calibrated emotional performance. The play offers a multi-layered perspective of a physician in crisis, caught between a desire to serve his patients and the demands of the current health system.”

JOHANNA RIAN, MAYO CLINIC,  
PROGRAM DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR  
HUMANITIES IN MEDICINE



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## BIOGRAPHIES

# SIDE EFFECTS



**MICHAEL MILLIGAN** (*Playwright and Performer*) has appeared on Broadway: *August: Osage County*, *La Bete*, *Jerusalem*. Off Broadway: *Thom Pain*, *Mercy Killers*, *The Golem*. Chicago: *Iago* in *Othello* and *Tug of War: Civil Strife* at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater. *Mercy Killers* at American Theater Company. Michael will appear in the Goodman's upcoming world premiere, *Blind Date*. Michael has performed Shakespeare hither and yon with groups like the Royal Shakespeare Company, The Shakespeare Theater in DC. Alabama, Utah, Colorado, New Jersey, Milwaukee, and Illinois Shakespeare festivals, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, and Shakespeare and Company. Regionally, Michael has played at the Guthrie, Westport Playhouse, The McCarter Theater, St. Louis Rep, Cincinnati Playhouse and more. Michael received the 2013 Fringe First award in Edinburgh for *Mercy Killers* which he has performed 100s of times around the country at professional theaters, universities, medical schools, libraries, union halls, community centers, and the House of Representatives in St. Paul, Minnesota. Michael's other plays include *Phaeton* (Helen Hayes Nomination), *Heroin*, *Urgent: Aliens*, *The Sea Wolf*, and a musical adaptation of *Aesop's Fables*

commissioned by Circle in the Square in NYC. Television credits include: *Law and Order*, *Person of Interest*, *The Knick*, *Chicago Justice*, and *APB*. Michael is a graduate of the Juilliard Drama Division where he received the John Houseman Prize. When not acting and writing, Michael is director of PR and Marketing for his brother's knife company, New West Knifeworks. New West has been featured in *The Chicago Tribune*, *Bon Appetit*, *Saveur*, *Fine Cooking*, *Wine Spectator*, *Forbes Life*, *Cooking Light*, *Food and Wine* and *New York Magazine* among others. Michael is also the founding artistic director of the Poor Box Theater. [www.poorboxtheater.com](http://www.poorboxtheater.com) [www.newwestknifeworks.com](http://www.newwestknifeworks.com) Michael lives in Chicago.

**TOM OPPENHEIM** (*Director*) In his position as artistic director and president of the Stella Adler Studio of Acting for over 15 years, he has articulated a mission, engaged top faculty, structured a world-class training program and created a cultural center. He originated the Harold Clurman Laboratory Theater Company in 2002 which has since presented over twenty productions including 11 world premieres. In addition to producing all of the Lab's plays, he also directed "As You Like It" by William Shakespeare (with Steve Cook). "Songs and Statues," by Peter Nickowitz (world premiere), "Our Town" by Thornton Wilder, "What Shall I Give My Children?" by Don K. Williams (world premiere) and others. He created MAD (the Harold Clurman Center for New works in Movement and Dance Theater) a dance theater company that has presented over 30 new works, the majority of which were commissioned world premieres, and which includes Marie Gillis, Bill T. Jones and Mikhail Baryshnikov on the advisory board. He spearheaded the creation of the Harold Clurman Art Series which has presented artists including Harold Bloom, Edward Albee, John Ashbery, Julianne More and Harold Mabern in events that are free and open to the public. Under Oppenheim's leadership, the Stella Adler Outreach Division, a program designed to educate urban youth, was created. Since 2004, the division has provided free theater training to over 2,000 low income New York City public school students. In addition, the Stella Adler Studio of Acting trains over 500 actors per year. Oppenheim studied acting at the National Shakespeare Conservatory and with his grandmother, Stella Adler. Acting credits include the title role in Shakespeare's "Macbeth" as well as Michael in Buzz McLaughlin's "Sister Calling My Name", both with the Harold Clurman Theater Company.